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The use of dramatization to teach social studies to hearing-impaired children

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The Use
of
Dramatization
to
Teach Social Studies
to
Hearing-Impaired Children

LIBRARY
CENTRAL INSTITUTE FOR THE DEAF

by
Timothy M. Lamb

for
Speech and Hearing 570
"Independent Study"

Advised by:

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Central Institute for the Deaf
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St. Louis, Missouri

May 5, 1978

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I. Introduction and Purposes

According to Lane there are three factors involved in the ultimate success of a hearing-impaired child ("however we may define success"₁). They are: the intrinsic motivation of the child, cooperative efforts of the child's parents, and the skills and dedication of the child's teacher. This project concerned itself with the intrinsic motivation of the child. In a previous study of my own I found that dramatization is effective with educable mentally retarded in establishing self-motivation. The basic question behind this project is; "Can dramatization be a factor for hearing-impaired children in learning a content subject ?".

Findings of many studies have indicated that the deaf are deficient in imagination and abstract thinking (Silver '77, Singer and Lenahan '76, Levine '67, Myklebust '64). These same studies, however, support the theory that the deaf have potential to think imaginatively which can be realized by proper training. Dramatization, as I have found, can motivate children and aid them to become imaginative thinkers.

The purposes of this study were:

1. To observe the results of the use of dramatization in teaching social studies to a class of hearing-impaired children.

1. Helen S. Lane, Ph.D. "Preschool Education for Deaf Children", Education and Psychosocial Aspects of Deafness, Hardy and Cull.

2. To develop some principles from this experience that would highlight the usefulness of dramatization as a teaching tool.
3. To determine the proper placement of dramatization within the lesson.

An underlying purpose of this project was to foster imagination through dramatization of the social studies' concepts involved.

II. Class Description

The class used for the project was made up of children ten years of age from many different backgrounds. Two of the six children were residential pupils; three had been enrolled in the Parent-Infant program at Central Institute.

TABLE ONE

Child	C.A.	PTA* (better ear)	Performance IQ WISC (R)	Grade Equiv., Reading#
JC	10-5	97 dB	85	2.9
JF	10-3	101	115	3.2
TL	10-4	96	86	2.8
JM	10-4	60	80	2.6
SR	10-4	100	108	2.4
WS	10-8	97	68@	2.1

* - Average taken at 250, 500, 1000, 2000 Hz .

@ - The WISC-R score was not in line with other test scores. The mean IQ of three other performance tests was 77.

- The average of the Paragraph Meaning and sentence and word meaning sections of the American School Achievement Tests-Primary Level (Administered 2/78).

The class was reading a first grade, level one reader from Scott - Foresman; Open Highways Readers. Spontaneously, the children used simple sentences with and without prepositional phrases. They could generate the past and simple future tenses of familiar verbs and used them appropriately in structured settings. The present tense could be used with teacher assistance. The class was familiar with and could answer most basic question forms (ie. who, what, where, and why).

III. Procedures

A three-scene play was written concerning the boyhood of Abraham Lincoln. The four stories used in the lesson were written from the play (See the Appendix for all of this). The first story introduced the era (1800's), the second told of Lincoln's kindness, the third reported Lincoln's school days, the fourth dealt with Lincoln's honesty. I met the class for one hour a day. The unit was to last two weeks and be concluded with the production of the play.

The following is an outline of the procedure used by me for the individual lessons (the stories).

- A. I checked an pre-taught vocabulary found within the story.
- B. I encouraged oral discussion of the story topic. The guide for this discussion was the written questions about the story.
- C. The children read the story.

D. The written questions were asked orally by me.

E. The children dramatized a concept within the story.

1. I selected the children, who participated in the dramatization, to be the characters within the story.

2. I described the action of the story.

3. I gave the children the language needed so that they could interact appropriately during the dramatization.

4. The children act^{ed} out the story.

F. I asked and the children answered oral questions concerning the dramatization.

G. The children wrote the answers to written questions concerning the story.

IV. Results

The unit on Lincoln's life was broken up into four stories and three scenes of a play. Due to weather, illness and time only three stories were completed and one scene of the play worked upon. The discussion of the results of this project will follow the work done in class; the stories and the scene of the play. Problems will be discussed under the story heading in which they occurred. Since the teaching of the stories lasted anywhere from one to three days, a day-by-day review is not practical.

A. Story One: "Long Ago"

To begin talking about Lincoln the children needed some background information on how people lived in the 1800's and why they lived the way they did. This story stated the fact that the Pilgrims hunted for food because they did not have grocery stores. The story then compared the Pilgrims to the people of the 1800's (Lincoln's era). Although there were grocery stores, only rich people could buy food there. Poor people, like Lincoln, had to hunt for food or grow it themselves.

At this point of the project I observed that it took at least two days to finish one story. This was due to my inexperience regarding the most effective way to use the procedures and the children's slower-than-expected rate of progress.

The concept of needing money to buy food at a grocery store and being poor was hard for the children to grasp, at first. When discussion turned to the 1800's the children kept referring back to the Pilgrims. This was overcome after I told the children to think about the people of the 1800's. The association of Lincoln to the 1800's also solved the problem.

For all the stories, dramatization(role-playing) was a summarizing activity. The dramatization for this story involved role-playing in a grocery store. The object of the dramatization was to buy some vegetables. One child was given some money and another child was not. The ensuing scenes aided in the under-

standing of this concept.

B. Story Two: "Abraham Lincoln"

This story introduced Sarah, Lincoln's sister, and established their poverty. The story told of Lincoln's kindness to animals by the way in which Lincoln reacted when he shot a turkey.

The children had trouble with the idea of hunting. It was pre-taught as a vocabulary item but understanding came about through the dramatization at the end of the story. The action of the dramatization included carrying guns through the forest and looking for animals. The characters, Abe and Sarah, found a turkey and shot it. The dramatization served to illustrate hunting.

At this time I began re-examining the placement of the dramatization within the lesson. The dramatization could have had more of an impact if presented when the children showed signs of not understanding the concept.

During this lesson I observed that the classroom was very restrictive for dramatic play. The area in front of the desks was not large and the group and the children were impeded movement. Even when the desks were moved back, somewhat, there

was still not enough room.

C. Story Three: "Abe"

This story told of Lincoln's school years. The children were told that Lincoln wrote with the burnt end of a stick because he could not afford a pencil and that Abe wrote on a board because he could not afford paper.

The concept was understood well from a teacher demonstration. Originally, the children were to pretend they were Lincoln and were to do some arithmetic computation. The children were to try to use the stick and the board.

The time allotment for this project proved to be a pervading problem which repeatedly caused me to change my plans. I did this only when I felt it would not impede the learning of the children.

The concept of borrowing and returning, which related to Lincoln's borrowing of books to study from, could have been dramatized. This concept was demonstrated upon the suggestion of Mrs. Geier, the department supervisor, by borrowing money from me that she said she would return later. Again time was a limiting factor especially since so much time was taken up on this concept within the pre-teaching stage. Therefore, this "teacher demonstration" dramatization, involving two children,

was not attempted.

D. The Use of Drama : Scene One

This scene dealt with the hunting story (story number one). First the children "read through" the scene at their desks and then they "walked through" it. Each child got to "take a part" after which I worked on speech problems.

The children had great difficulty with the stage directions. They said the stage directions and the speaker indicators out loud, along with their lines. Even after instruction, individually at first then once as a group, the children did not understand. It has been my experience that older hearing children have this problem too.

While "reading through" the play a great number of speech problems were observed. The speech work that ensued was beneficial even though the play was never produced.

The classroom teacher, Miss Schick, and I felt that the Play would not be ready in time for the projected performance date, so I opted for doing the play for the enjoyment of the class. Even though the class found it hard to understand the concepts of a play they did enjoy the action and the change of pace.

V . Discussion

Although no conclusive results developed from this project, some observations can be cited that lead to suggestions for further study and future classroom use.

Dramatization is most appropriate when a concept is first introduced. It is this author's opinion that dramatization can give motivating visual information which will aid learning if presented at the right time. The "right time" may vary in placement within the lesson according to the children's needs. When the children first encounter a concept may be an opportune time for dramatization. During this project the connection between the dramatization and the stories was not always concrete. If the dramatization occurred early in the lesson, during the reading of the story, the connection between the story and the dramatization would have been more tenable.

When developing a unit involving dramatization one should carefully consider the class' abilities. If a class functions at a below average level in learning language then that should restrict the bulk of material you plan to cover. In this project a two week time limit was established and so it would have been best to do only the first two stories and one scene of the play. Dramatization should not be restricted to the very bright but tailored to suit the abilities of all children.

The teacher should be very familiar with the class he is teaching, the material being taught, and the procedures involved, before attempting a unit involving dramatization. In this way the teacher will be better able to judge; (1) the effect of dramatization on learning, (2) the placement of the dramatization within the lesson, (3) when circumstances dictate the creation of a dramatization during the teaching of a lesson.

Dramatization can be an effective aid in teaching social studies concepts. It cannot teach a concept by itself but must function as a part of the formal teaching of the lesson. Dramatization has the potential to provide meaningful experiences. These experiences are conceptualized when associated with the appropriate language. For the hearing-impaired children of this project language is associated with experience through a question - answer paradigm. Dramatization is a verbal or physical exchange between two people, so by definition dramatization cannot teach concepts. If dramatization included questions from the teacher and answers from the children the action involved would become stilted which would distort the experience. Therefore, dramatization cannot teach a concept but can aid in its development by providing meaningful experiences.

If a play is involved a great deal of time should be allotted for speech practice. Also when writing a play care should

be taken not to include complex stage directions which are confusing. Written directions may be eliminated and relayed orally. The production of a play should be a fun activity; one in which the children can put their understandings to use. The language or the format of the written directions should not be so confusing that it is a frustration for the children.

The teacher should be careful in selecting the physical environment of the lesson. If the children can function outside the structured classroom setting a change of rooms may be beneficial. An empty classroom would be ideal for rehearsing a play. If the children have room to move around the dramatization may be more effective. If the children cannot function outside their classroom then the dramatization will be effected accordingly. There will be less movement involved in an activity. This does not imply one should withhold dramatization from children who cannot learn in natural situations but the teacher should be aware of the limitation (physical movement) and plan accordingly.

VI . Recommendations

These suggestions should be followed when using dramatization in a classroom of hearing-impaired children.

1. Dramatization should be planned at a time when the child first encounters a concept. This may happen as early as the pre-teaching vocabulary stage.
2. Class ability should be taken into consideration when planning a unit involving dramatization.
3. The teacher should be very familiar with his class before attempting dramatization.
4. Dramatization cannot teach a concept but can aid in establishing a concept.
5. When rehearsing a play, speech work is necessary and time consuming. Good speech is always a concern but it is an essential part of producing a play because people (children and adults), who view the play, must be able to understand the action from what the performers say.
6. The teacher should plan the dramatization according to the degree to which the children need a learning environment with a minimum of distraction and a maximum of teacher-controlled attention.
7. Taking all possible problems into consideration dramatization can inwardly motivate a child and should be employed to do so, because it is fun and an outlet for emotional expression.

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"Long Ago"

The Pilgrims did not have any grocery stores. They hunted for food. The Indians helped them plant gardens.

In 1800 there were grocery stores. Some people could buy food but others were poor. They could not buy food at a store. They hunted for food and planted gardens.

Could Pilgrims go to a grocery store ? _____

What did they do? _____

Who helped the Pilgrims plant gardens ? _____

Were there grocery stores in 1800 ? _____

Could everyone buy food at a grocery store in 1800 ? _____

What did poor people do to get food? _____

Where did they hunt for food? _____



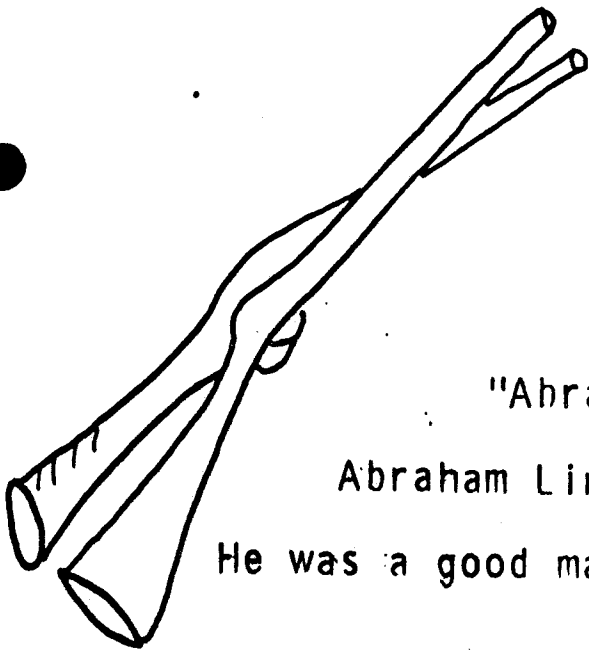
If you have money can you buy food ? _____

Can you hunt for food? _____

Can you plant gardens? _____

Name _____

-17-



"Abraham Lincoln"

Abraham Lincoln was our 16th President.

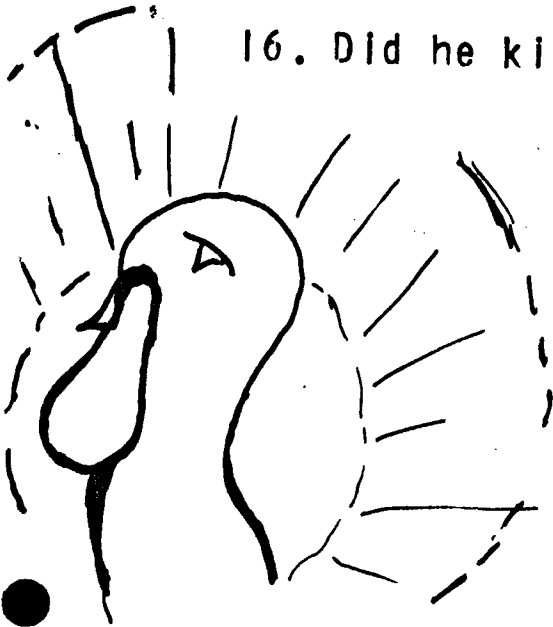
He was a good man. Everybody called him Abe.

When Abe was eight years old he lived in Indiana. Abe had a sister. Her name was Sarah. Abe and Sarah were very poor.

One day Abe and Sarah went to look for food. They brought guns. They saw a turkey and shot it. Abe was very sad. He never killed an animal again because he was kind.

1. Who was Abraham Lincoln ? _____
2. Was he a good man ? _____
3. What did everyone call him ? _____
4. What state did he live in ? _____

5. How old was Abe when he lived in Indiana ? _____
6. What was his sister's name ? _____
7. Were Abe and Sarah rich ? _____
8. Could they buy food at the grocery story ? _____
9. Why not ? _____
10. What did Abe and Sarah do one day ? _____
11. What did they bring ? _____
12. What happened ? _____
13. Was Abe happy ? _____
14. Did he like to kill animals ? _____
15. Why not ? _____
16. Did he kill an animal again ? _____



Name _____

"Abe Lincoln "

When Abe was ten years old he went to school. He was very smart and liked school.

Long ago poor people did not have paper or pencils. Abe did not have any paper or pencils. Abe had a stick and a board to do his homework.

Abe Lincoln borrowed books from friends. He read them by candlelight. Abe did math by candlelight too.

1. When did Abe go to school ? _____
2. Was Abe very smart ? _____
3. Did Abe have paper and pencils ? _____
4. Why not ? _____



5. What did he have ? _____

6. Did Abe Lincoln borrow books ? _____

7. Do you borrow books ,? _____

8. If you borrow a book _____

a. you keep it.

b. you give it back.

c. you tear it up.

"Abe Lincoln"

Sarah

A Play

Scene One

Narrater: Welcome. Today we will tell you about Abraham Lincoln.

Long ago Abraham Lincoln was the President of the United States. Everyone called him Abe.

When he was eight years old, he lived in Indiana. One day Abe and his sister Sarah went to look for food.

(Abe and Sarah come in with guns.)

Sarah: Look Abe ! There is a turkey behind the bush!

Abe: Shhhh ! Quiet Sarah you will scare the turkey away.

(Abe shoots the gun.)

Sarah: Oh ! Abe, you shot the turkey.

(Abe walks behind the bush. He is sad)

Abe: Sarah, I am very sad.

Sarah: Why are you sad ?

Abe: The turkey is dead. I will never kill an animal again.

(Abe and Sarah leave. The narrator comes in.)

Narrater: Abe Lincoln was very kind. He never killed an animal again.

(The narrater leaves.)